Gertrude Helen Sheppard Laughlin
(1880 - 1958)

Research Notes: for Gertrude Helen Sheppard Laughlin (1880 - 1958)

Research Overview:

Gertrude Helen Sheppard Laughlin was born in 1880 into a large Irish immigrant household in Clinton, Iowa, and spent nearly three decades there before marriage carried her east and then steadily west through a succession of Midwestern cities. She appears consistently in census records from childhood through early adulthood, always embedded in family: first as one of many children in a crowded household shaped by immigration, remarriage, and loss, and later as a wife and mother whose early married life unfolded through repeated moves. Between her parents' blended families, there were ten daughters, yet only two lived to have children; Gertrude was one of them. Her life is clearly traceable in dates and places, but the adult record tightens over time, beginning with marriage away from home and followed by years of repeated moves.

Gertrude grew up in a household shaped by remarriage and repeated loss. Census records place her among both full siblings and step-siblings in a household headed by an Irish-born mother and reshaped repeatedly by death. Several siblings died young, and loss recurs across Gertrude's early years, altering the household even as its address remained the same. From 1880 through 1905, she appears consistently in state and federal censuses in Clinton, suggesting continuity of residence and care despite a family structure in near-constant adjustment.

Marriage in 1908 marked a clear shift. Gertrude left Iowa for Pennsylvania, then Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, following her husband's movements and bearing five children in a span of ten years, including one who died at birth. In census records, she appears almost entirely through her roles as wife and mother, with little change or elaboration across successive enumerations. The death of her husband in 1923 ended this phase abruptly, after which her circumstances became harder to trace with confidence.

In her later life, Gertrude appears intermittently and sometimes ambiguously in the record. She is not readily located in the 1940 census, is not consistently associated with her surviving children as they reach adulthood,

and is last clearly documented at her death in Illinois in 1958, followed by burial back in Clinton. Taken together, the records trace a life that is complete in its chronology and scope. After her husband's death, Gertrude appears as someone who moves among households rather than establishing one of her own, present but seldom fixed in one place.

Speculative Narrative:

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Time Line:

5 Apr 1880 - Birth at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[1]

1880 - US Census at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[2]

Jas. Sheppard - head of household, white, male, born ?, age 44, married x years, born Ireland, parents born Ireland, sawmill, owns home

Ellen Sheppard - wife, white, female, born ?, age 36, mother of 6 children, 4 living, born Ireland, parents born Ireland

Joseph Sheppard - son, white, male, born ?, age 18, single, born Iowa, parents born Ireland

Mary Sheppard - daughter, white, female, born ?, age 15, single, born Iowa, parents born Ireland

Ellen Sheppard - daughter, white, female, born ?, age 14, single, born Iowa, parents born Ireland

John Sheppard - son, white, male, born ?, age 13, single, born Iowa, parents born Ireland

James Sheppard - son, white, male, born ?, age 12, single, born Iowa, parents born Ireland

Eliza Sheppard - daughter, white, female, born ?, age 2, single, born Iowa, parents born Ireland

Gertrude Sheppard - daughter, white, female, born ?, age 2/12, single, born Iowa, parents born Ireland

John Clark - step son, white, male, born ?, age 13, single, born Iowa, parents born Ireland

[1] "Find a Grave Index," database, *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVVR-LMZC : 11 January 2022), Gertrude Helen Sheppard Laughlin, ; Burial, Clinton, Clinton, Iowa, United States of America, Saint Mary's Cemetery; citing record ID 24503372, *Find a Grave*, http://www.findagrave.com.

[2] "United States Census, 1880", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MD2Q-3H5 : Thu Mar 07 12:32:12 UTC 2024), Entry for Jas. Sheppard and Ellen Sheppard, 1880.

Peter Clark - step son, white, male, born ?, age 7, single, born Iowa, parents born Ireland

24 Nov 1882 - Birth of brother Charles Ames Sheppard (1882 - 1941) at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[3]

21 Feb 1885 - Birth of brother Thomas Edward Sheppard (1885 - 1955) at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[4]

25 Oct 1885 - Birth of sister Hannah T. Sheppard (1885 - 1886) at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[5]

1885 - Iowa State Census at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[6]

James Shepord, 47

Ellen Shepord, 40

Joseph Shepord, 23

Mary Shepord, 21

John Shepord, 12
James Shepord, 17

Lizzie Shepord, 7

[3] "United States, Veterans Administration Master Index, 1917-1940", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:WQBH-Y8MM: Sun Mar 10 04:44:46 UTC 2024), Entry for Charles Ames Sheppard, 22 April 1919.

[4] "Iowa, County Births, 1880-1935", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XVZ6-74K: Sat Aug 31 06:00:45 UTC 2024), Entry for Shepherd and James Shepherd, 21 Feb 1885.

[5] Birth of sister Hannah T. Sheppard

[6] "Iowa State Census, 1885", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VTS4-J81: Sat Jul 20 03:17:56 UTC 2024), Entry for James Shephard and Ellen Shephard, 1885.

Gertie Shepord, 5

Charles Shepord, 3

Thomas Shepord, 0

Hannah Shepord, 78

17 May 1886- Death of sister Hannah T. Sheppard (1885 - 1886) at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[7]

2 Jun 1886- Death of half-brother Joseph W. Sheppard (1861 - 1886) at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[8]

29 Oct 1886 - Birth of sister Theresa Sheppard (1886 - 1899) at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[9]

3 Aug 1889 - Death of half-sister Ella G. Sheppard (1865 - 1892) at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[10]

17 May 1889 - Death of sister Theresa Sheppard (1886 -1899) at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[11]

1895 - Iowa State Census at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa[12]

Gertrude Sheppard, age

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[7] Death of sister Hannah T. Sheppard

[8] Death of half-brother Joseph W. Sheppard

[9] Birth of sister Theresa Sheppard

[10] Death of half-sister Ella G. Sheppard

[11] Death of sister Theresa Sheppard

[12] "Iowa State Census, 1895", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VTS4-J81: Sat Jul 20 03:17:56 UTC 2024), Entry for James Shephard and Ellen Shephard, 1895.

1900 - US Census at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[13]

James Sheppard - head of household, white, male, age 64, born ?, married x years, born Ireland, parents born Ireland

Ellen Sheppard - wife, white, female, age 54, born ?, married x years, born Ireland, parents born Ireland

John L Clark - stepson, white, male, age 32, born ?, married x years, born Iowa, parents born Ireland, 32

Lizzie Sheppard - daughter, white, female, age 21, born ?, born Iowa, parents born Ireland

Gertrude Sheppard - daughter, white, female, age 20, born ?, born Iowa, parents born Ireland

Charles Sheppard - son, white, male, age 17, born ?, born Iowa, parents born Ireland

Thomas Sheppard - son, white, male, age 15, born ?, born Iowa, parents born Ireland

1905 - Iowa State Census at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[14]

Gertrude Sheppard, 24

17 May 1889 - Death of sister Elizabeth Sheppard (1878 -1906) at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[15]

[13] "United States Census, 1900", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M9KW-3WX: Tue Jul 23 15:08:32 UTC 2024), Entry for James Sheppard and Ellen Sheppard, 1900.

[14] "Iowa State Census, 1905", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVM5-SJG7: Fri Mar 15 20:07:16 UTC 2024), Entry for Gertrude Sheppard, 1905.

[15] Death of sister Elizabeth Sheppard

12 Aug 1908 - Marriage to John Arthur Laughlin (1875 - 1923) at Pittsburgh, Allegheny, Pennsylvania.[16]

"Announcement of the marriage of Mr. J. A. Laughlin, of Pittsburg, Pa., and Miss Gertrude Sheppard, of Clinton, was received in the city Saturday by Division Road master John Laughlin, at the Iowa Central, and wife, parents of Mr. Laughlin. The wedding was celebrated at St. Paul's cathedral, Pittsburg."

Note on the marriage record: The announcement, received in Clinton by John Laughlin's parents, frames the marriage as news delivered after the fact rather than a local event built around family attendance. The wedding took place in Pittsburgh, not in Clinton, and the notice does not suggest a larger gathering or travel from Iowa. Whatever family may have been present, the record supports a small wedding at a distance, with his parents notified in Iowa.

20 Jul 1909 - Birth of daughter Helen Gertrude Laughlin (1909 - 1979) at Pittsburgh, Allegheny, Pennsylvania.[17]

1910 - US Census at Pittsburgh, Allegheny, Pennsylvania.[18]

John Laughlin - head of household, male, white, age 34, single, born Iowa, parents born Iowa

Gertrude Laughlin - wife, female, white, age 30, single, born Iowa, parents born Ireland

Helen Laughlin - daughter, female, white, age 1, single, born Pennsylvania, parents born Iowa

[16] "Pennsylvania, County Marriages, 1885-1950", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:Q281-SXJH: Fri Mar 08 19:25:54 UTC 2024), Entry for John A Laughli* and Gertrude H Sheppera, 1908.

[17] Birth of daughter Helen Gertrude Laughlin

[18] "United States Census, 1910", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MGHN-ZK3: Fri Mar 08 21:43:00 UTC 2024), Entry for John Laughlin and Gertrude Laughlin, 1910.

10 Feb 1911 - Birth of son John Arthur Laughlin (1911 - 1953) at Pittsburgh, Allegheny, Pennsylvania.[19]

Death of half-sister Mary Ann Sheppard (1864 - 1914) at Iowa[20]

22 Mar 1915 - Birth of daughter Mary Elizabeth Laughlin (1915 - 1997) at Cleveland, Cuyahoga, Ohio.[21]

1915 - Military WWI Draft Card at Elkhart, Elkhart, Indiana.[22]

23 Apr 1917- Birth of daughter Madelyn Rose Laughlin (1915 - 1997) at Elkhart, Elkhart, Indiana.[23]

26 Jul 1917 - Death of father James T. Sheppard (1836 - 1916) Clinton, Clinton, Iowa.[24]

Note on early married residence: Between 1909 and 1917, Gertrude gave birth to four children in three different states. The sequence of births in Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Elkhart shows that the family did not settle as it grew. Residence shifts coincide closely with the arrival of children, and no single place emerges as a lasting home during these years.

15 Feb 1919- Birth and death of daughter Margaret Laughlin (1919 - 1919) at Elkhart, Elkhart, Indiana.[25]

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[19] Birth of son John Arthur Laughlin

[20] Death of half-sister Mary Ann Sheppard

[21] Birth of daughter Mary Elizabeth Laughlin

[22] Military Record

[23] Birth of daughter Madelyn Rose Laughlin

[24] Death of father James T. Sheppard

[25] Birth and death of daughter Margaret Laughlin

Find where she is buried, probably next to her father at St. Mary's Cemetery in Clinton, Iowa.

1920 - US Census at Elkhart, Elkhart, Indiana.[26]

John Arthur Laughlin - head, rents, male, age 44, married, can read, can write, born Iowa, parents born in Ireland

Gertrude Laughlin - wife, female, white, age 39, married, can read, can write, born Iowa, parents born Ireland

Helen Laughlin - daughter, female, white, age 10, single, can read, can write, born Pennsylvania, parents born Iowa

John Laughlin - son, male, white, age 8, single, can read, can write, born Pennsylvania, parents born Iowa

Mary Elizabeth Laughlin - daughter, female, white, age 4, single, can't read, can't write, born Ohio, parents born Iowa

Madaline Laughlin- daughter, female, white, age 2, single, can't read, can't write, born Ohio, parents born Iowa

William F. Laughlin - male, age 36, divorced, can read, can write, born Iowa, parents born in Ireland

Thelma Maloney, 19

22 Dec 1923 - Death of husband John Laughlin (1875 - 1923) at Chicago, Cook, Illinois.[27]

Loss: The death of an infant daughter in 1919 is followed four years later by the death of Gertrude's husband. After 1923, the record no longer presents her as part of a stable marital household. Subsequent entries shift

[26] "United States Census, 1920", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MF74-S48: Fri Mar 08 08:44:21 UTC 2024), Entry for John Arthur Laughlin and Gertrude Laughlin, 1920.

[27] "Illinois, Cook County Deaths, 1871-1998", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QL4R-7SST: Sat Aug 31 09:37:26 UTC 2024), Entry for John Arthur Laughlin and John Laughlin, 22 Dec 1923.

toward widowhood, shared residences, and less clearly defined household roles.

Note on widowhood and residence: After her husband's death, Gertrude does not return to a single place of origin or settle into a fixed household. Instead, the record shows continued movement among Midwestern towns, extending the pattern of relocation established during her marriage. Widowhood marks a change in household structure, but not a change in geographic stability.

1928 - Living at South Bend, Mishawaka, Indiana[28]

20 Jun 1930 - Death of half-brother John Leo Clarke (1869 - 1930) at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa[29]

1930 - US Census at Chicago, Cook, Illinois[30]

John Laughlin - head, rents, male white, age x, married, can read, can write, born in Pennsylvania, parents born in Iowa

Gertrude Laughlin - wife female, white, age x, married, can read, can write born in Illinois, parents born in Ireland

Gertrude Laughlin - mother-in-law, female, white, age x, a widow, born Iowa, parents born Ireland

Madeline Laughlin - sister, female, white, age x, single, born Indiana, parents born in Iowa

[28] "Illinois, Cook County Deaths, 1871-1998", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QL4R-7SST: Sat Aug 31 09:37:26 UTC 2024), Entry for John Arthur Laughlin and John Laughlin, 22 Dec 1923.

[29] "Illinois, Cook County Deaths, 1871-1998", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QL4R-7SST: Sat Aug 31 09:37:26 UTC 2024), Entry for John Arthur Laughlin and John Laughlin, 22 Dec 1923.

[30] "Illinois, Cook County Deaths, 1871-1998", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QL4R-7SST: Sat Aug 31 09:37:26 UTC 2024), Entry for John Arthur Laughlin and John Laughlin, 22 Dec 1923.

Note on the 1930 household: The 1930 census places Gertrude living in her adult son's household shortly after his marriage, along with her youngest daughter. The arrangement represents a clear shift: Gertrude isn't the head or co-head of a family, but as a dependent member within the next generation's household.

16 Dec 1934 - Death of half-brother James Sheppard (1867 - 1934) at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa[31]

1940 - US Census[32]

Find Gertrude Laughlin in the 1940 census; she is not living with her daughter, Mary Brandt. Her youngest daughter, Madeline, lives with Gertrude's friend and sister-in-law, Anna Barrett.

Note on the 1940 census: Gertrude is not readily located in the 1940 census. This absence may reflect the way her later life was lived within others' households rather than in one consistently enumerated as her own.

16 Dec 1941 - Death of brother Charles Ames Sheppard (1882 - 1941) at Lincoln, Lancaster, Nebraska[33]

1950 - US Census at Barrington, Lake, Illinois[34]

18 Jul 1953 - Death of son John Arthur Laughlin (1911 - 1953) at Chicago, Cook, Illinois[35]

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[31] "Illinois, Cook County Deaths, 1871-1998", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QL4R-7SST: Sat Aug 31 09:37:26 UTC 2024), Entry for John Arthur Laughlin and John Laughlin, 22 Dec 1923.

[32] "Illinois, Cook County Deaths, 1871-1998", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QL4R-7SST: Sat Aug 31 09:37:26 UTC 2024), Entry for John Arthur Laughlin and John Laughlin, 22 Dec 1923.

[33] "Illinois, Cook County Deaths, 1871-1998", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QL4R-7SST: Sat Aug 31 09:37:26 UTC 2024), Entry for John Arthur Laughlin and John Laughlin, 22 Dec 1923.

[34] "Illinois, Cook County Deaths, 1871-1998", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QL4R-7SST: Sat Aug 31 09:37:26 UTC 2024), Entry for John Arthur Laughlin and John Laughlin, 22 Dec 1923.

[35] "Illinois, Cook County Deaths, 1871-1998", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QL4R-7SST: Sat Aug 31 09:37:26 UTC 2024), Entry for John Arthur Laughlin and John Laughlin, 22 Dec 1923.

14 Dec 1955 - Death of brother Thomas Edward Sheppard (1885 - 1955) at Chicago, Cook, Illinois[36]

1 Oct 1958 - Death at Elgin, Kane, Illinois[37]

Oct 1958 - Obituary

Mrs. Gertrude S. Laughlin, 78, mother of Mrs. Henry Brandt and Mrs. Alfred Trestik of Barrington, died Wednesday morning at the Elgin Hospital after an extended illness.

Funeral services are scheduled for Friday morning in Clinton, Iowa, with a mass at St. Mary's Catholic Church and a burial in St. Mary's Cemetery. The remains will be resting at Snyder Funeral chapel at Clinton this Thursday afternoon and evening. The family would appreciate masses in lieu of flowers.

Gertrude Sheppard was born April 5, 1880, at Clinton and was married there to John Arthur Laughlin in 1908. She was a member of St. Mary's (typo should be St. Anne's) Parish and served as a church organist there for some 20 years.

Her husband died in 1923, and for the past 20 years, Mrs. Laughlin spent most of her time with her daughters and joined St. Anne's Church. Surviving are three daughters, Mrs. Helen Langhoff of Las Vegas, NV; Mrs. Mary Brandt of Magnolia Road and Mrs. Madeline Trestik of Prospect Avenue, nine grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

Preceding her death, besides her husband, was her son John in 1953.

Oct 1958 - Burial at Clinton, Clinton, Iowa[38]

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[36] "Illinois, Cook County Deaths, 1871-1998", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QL4R-7SST: Sat Aug 31 09:37:26 UTC 2024), Entry for John Arthur Laughlin and John Laughlin, 22 Dec 1923.

[37] "Illinois, Cook County Deaths, 1871-1998", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QL4R-7SST: Sat Aug 31 09:37:26 UTC 2024), Entry for John Arthur Laughlin and John Laughlin, 22 Dec 1923.

[38] "Illinois, Cook County Deaths, 1871-1998", , *FamilySearch* (https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QL4R-7SST: Sat Aug 31 09:37:26 UTC 2024), Entry for John Arthur Laughlin and John Laughlin, 22 Dec 1923.

Closing recollection: The record closes with Gertrude returning to Clinton to be buried beside her husband and among the extended family that had defined her early life. What does not appear in the obituary, but was remembered by her granddaughter, is a woman who could play the piano and sing, who was a gifted cook and baker, and who enjoyed teaching others in her kitchen. She was remembered as a warm and attentive grandmother.